

*The Eternity of future Punishment
asserted and vindicated. In An-
swer to Mr Whiston's late
Treatise on that Subject.*

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In TWO
SERMONS
Preached before the
UNIVERSITY
OF
OXFORD,

On Sunday, March 21. 1741.

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GUALT. HODGES

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THE following Sermons were favourably heard by the Learned Audience, before whom They were delivered; and were honoured by the Vice-Chancellor, and Heads of Houses, that were present, with a Request for their Publication, which was at that Time declined. Content with having born my Testimony to this Important Doctrine of Revealed Religion, in the University of which I had been a Member, I was willing to hope, that a more accurate Answer, from some more able Hand, might be expected to such a Performance from such an Author. But since It has hitherto passed without any farther Notice, than a few anonymous Remarks, It has been thought proper, that These Discourses should even yet appear; which was now the more readily consented to, since They are the less likely to prevent any better Vindication; and since so contemptuous an Insult on the Clergy, who preach this Doctrine, seemed to call for some publick and professed Justification of Themselves and their Doctrine.

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Controversy is indeed a Task the least acceptable to every Christian Mind, especially amongst Those, who profess to own Christ for their Master; and who observe with any Degree of Attention and Concern, the ill Use, which is made of their Differences, by their common Enemies. Yet it is certain, both in a speculative View of the Reasons of it, and by the more convincing Argument of Experience, that the Intent of this Revelation may be as effectually defeated by corrupting its Doctrine, as by undermining its Authority. This Article in particular is so fundamental a Part of this Religion, It is so intimately united with its most essential Doctrines, and is itself the strongest Enforcement of its Practical Duties, that It is scarce possible to attack it in a more Vital Branch, or more to lessen the Influence of this great and gracious Scheme for the Reformation of Mankind, than by weakning the Sanctions, with which the Divine Lawgiver has supported it.

Nay These Attempts to distinguish away the Sense of the most Vital Parts of our Religion, by Those, who in Profession are Friends to the Authority of it, are rather more prejudicial than the open Attacks of Those, who more consistently reject the Whole. The Writings of Unbelievers do rather find than create Admirers. Men must be already deeply engaged in the Cause, before They
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will receive any Satisfaction from, or discern any Strength of Reason in, those Performances. But the Writings of Those, who still retain a Regard for the Gospel as a Divine Revelation, and are thought only to differ in some particular Point, are read with less Caution and Reserve; and have an Influence on unstable, tho' well-disposed Minds, who as yet abhor the Thought of renouncing their Saviour. By these however They are prepared for farther Discoveries, till so many particular Articles are given up, that the Remainder appears to be, as it truly is, a broken inconsistent Scheme, unworthy of a Divine Author, and as such is finally rejected. The Progress of Scepticism, like That of Practical Immorality, is usually gradual; and in both Cases the End proves such as would have startled a Rational Creature at the Beginning. Thus Those, who allow of Revelation in their own peculiar Sense of it, have contributed to remove all Sense of it out of Others, and Socinianism has in numberless Instances ended in Deism.

It is farther a Matter of some Patience, to observe, how freely the Writers, who oppose this Article, do give to Each Other, and assume to Themselves, the Title of Merciful and Good-natured Authors, and how readily They brand the Defenders of it with the contrary Character; whereas

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whereas the Question no way relates to the Benevolence and Compassion of frail sinful Creatures towards Each Other, but to the Proceedings of perfect Divine Justice towards his incorrigible impenitent Creatures. They certainly wish as well to, and act more friendly by their Fellow-Creatures, who fairly represent the Truth, as it is in Christ; who dare not prescribe to their Maker, but without Prejudice or Partiality confirm the plain Sense of the Divine Denunciations, and affectionately warn Mankind, in Time, of the irreversible Perdition, which Impenitence will plunge Them into: And They will one Day be found to have acted the merciless and cruel Part, who have betrayed Sinners into the actual Suffering of Everlasting Torments in the next World, by weakening their Belief of them in this.

The Limits of such Discourses, and indeed the Merits of the Cause, confined me to the Consideration of the Texts of the New Testament. These are the most full in their Expression, and the most determinate in their Meaning. It seemed unnecessary therefore to follow this Writer through the Old Testament, and much more through the Apocryphal Books, which He has cited as of equal Authority. Some of the former are really of Weight, and even Some of the latter, as far as their Authority extends; and as to the Testimo-
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nies, which He has produced from the Fathers, an Adversary would not have desired more pregnant Evidence against Him. Yet These are All evaded in the same arbitrary Manner as the Scripture-Phrase; and where They are so full and particular, that He seemed sensible, No Evasion could be put on the Terms Themselves, which could pass with any Reader, there They are pronounced singular, enthusiastical, Poetical Descriptions, and Philosophical Romances. But All This depends upon Mr. Whiston's single Authority, and where That is not implicitly received, The Doctrine of Eternal Punishment will still, upon the strictest Examination, be found consistent with Reason, Scripture and Primitive Antiquity

Whether What is here offered may be thought to deserve his Notice, the Event must shew. It may serve however to shew, contrary to his Suggestion, that there are Those, who dare to think freely on this Subject, the Result of whose freest Thoughts is a Serious Persuasion of the Truth of it. Had I not, upon the most careful and impartial Examination of it, been satisfied in Conscience, that This Article is clearly defensible against every Evasion of Wit or Learning, I would never have engaged in it; and therefore if Any Thing new be offered either from Scripture or Reason against it, It shall be fairly and fully considered

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dered; If only a Repetition of the same dogmatical Assertions, and arbitrary Evasions, It shall be left to stand or fall by the Weight of what is here offered; and I shall rest satisfied with having contributed my Endeavours to establish a Doctrine, which I firmly believe, It was the Intent of our Saviour to establish: which appears to be a Doctrine of such clear Evidence and such high Importance, that None, who do Justice to their Religion, can gainsay or deny it, and None, who do Justice to Themselves, can forget or neglect it.

2 THESS. I. 7, 8, 9.

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels; In flaming Fire taking Vengeance on Them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord; and from the Glory of his Power.

IT is observable in the Nature of Man, that the Desire of enjoying Pleasure is not so strong as That of avoiding Pain: His Expectations of Happiness have not so powerfull an Effect upon Him, as his Apprehensions of Misery. Whether it be, that in our present Situation We are capable of greater Degrees of Pain than of Pleasure, and that the Occasions of Affliction are more frequent than Those of Delight; or whether It

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be absolutely so in the Constitution of all Rational Beings; or whether It be owing to a Consciouſness, in fallen Creatures, of their Guilt as the Occasion of their Misery, yet as to Ourselves the Truth of the Remark seems indeed unquestionable. Some of the Philosophers saw This in so strong a Light, that They carried the Conclusion too far, and placed the chief Good of Man in what They called Indolence, a Sort of neutral State betwixt any considerable Enjoyment or Suffering; but though They were free hereby, as They designed to be, from the Infatuation of Those, who could imagine Pleasure to be the great Good of such a State as ours, yet were They taken Themselves in no small Absurdity, in making That the chief End of our Creation, which would have been better provided for by Non-Existence, whereby We should have been deprived of a Possibility of Pain or Pleasure. However the Principle they proceeded upon was true, that Pleasure itself is not desireable, when It must be attended with consequent Misery, and They have born their Testimony to this Doctrine, as inculcated both by Instinct and Reason. Now what They taught as Matter of Prudence, Revelation has enforced as Matter of Duty, has appealed to this acknowledged Truth

Truth ; and besides the Authority of its Declarations and Injunctions, has addressed our natural Apprehensions and natural Understanding for the Reasonableness of a suitable Regard in our Conduct. If Temporal Evils slight in Degree, and short in Continuance, were yet esteemed as an Over-Ballance for all the Gratifications of the most Voluptuous, what Proportion can the highest criminal Indulgencies bear to Pains, which will last beyond the Grave, will affect our whole Beings, and be of equal Duration with these immortal Beings? An Everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Supreme Being, whose Presence alone can administer Joy to a Soul created after its Makers Image, would be the most terrifying Consideration, that could be offered to our Thoughts, and This Doctrine, if really believed and seriously applied, could not fail of having that great Effect, which It was designed to have, by the Publication of the Gospel. But so it is, that the very Importance of this Motive to the Practice of Religion, has been made an Objection against the Belief of it. The Everlasting Continuance of that Interest, which is depending, is thought too considerable to be hazarded by the Prudence of our Behaviour, and an endless Punishment is therefore rejected

ed, because It is represented as endless; which the Bold Directors of their Makers Proceedings are at a Loss to reconcile with some of their own preconceived Notions. This Doctrine has long been a Stumbling-Block to Gain-sayers, and has been attacked by Those, who in Profession have been of the most different Sentiments. The avowed Enemies of Revelation have ever particularly struck at it, and even Some of the pretended Friends to our Faith have seemed to think, that They avoided a Difficulty by giving up this Article. I shall at present consider only the latest Performance of this kind, ^a wherein an Author, who seems to delight in departing from established Doctrines, after the Revival of many old Errors, and the Advancement of some new peculiar Ones, has at length engaged in this also, and in a Treatise on the Eternity of Hell-Torments has zealously attacked this Doctrine, has declaimed against it with Fury and Bitterness, and has laboured with great Earnestness to set Men free from any such Apprehensions. He begins with declaring, that ^b“the
“common Opinion in this Matter, if it were

^a The Eternity of Hell Torments considered &c. by Will. Whiston M.A. 1740. ^b Pag. 1st.

“for certain a real Part of Christianity, would
 “be a more insuperable Objection against it,
 “than any or all the present Objections of Un-
 “believers put together:” for which Conces-
 sion no Doubt Those Unbelievers will thank
 Him, who will readily own with Us, that it
 is a real Part of Christianity, in order to join
 in his Inference. And He concludes with the
 most indecent and scandalous Aspersions on
 Those of the Clergy who teach this Doctrine,
 a the greater Part of Whom He charges direct-
 ly with Prevarication and Hypocrisy, in preach-
 ing a Doctrine, which they do not, cannot
 believe Themselves; and Those Few, whom
 He supposes sincere in their Denunciations of
 eternal Vengeance against Sin, are dignified
 with the Title of weak Enthusiasts, who have
 neither Inclination, nor Abilities to look into
 the Foundation of received Opinions; and to
 crown his Remarks and Insults on such Di-
 vines, He seems to imagine Himself most sar-
 castical in this Observation, that ^b “We need
 “not indeed much wonder, that a bigotted
 “Athanasian may be in earnest in such a Doc-
 “trine.” Now as to the frequent Charges of
 Bigottry, They may, as far as appears, more

^a P. 135, &c. ^b P. 136.

usually with Justice be retorted. If there are blind and warm Defenders of received Opinions, there are likewise very evidently many blind and warm Opposers of them. We every Day see Instances of an unaccountable Zeal to proselyte Men to Errors, to which there is no imaginable Temptation, and more Warmth shewn in a worse Cause, than indeed We usually express in the Defence of the Best; and Whosoever shall observe in the Performance I am speaking of, the confident Manner of Dictating without proof, the insolent Method of triumphing without Victory, and the unbounded Liberty of abusing Doctrines and Persons without Evidence, the Indignation and Vehemence, the Rage and Bitterness expressed against this Article, and All who maintain it; need go no farther for an eminent Instance of Bigottry in Error and Heresy. -- As to the Title of Athanasian, That will not, I hope, as yet pass among Christians for a Term of Reproach; but It may be pertinent to the Subject, and illustrative of the Importance of the Article I am about to defend, to observe, that there is a real Connection betwixt This and the Athanasian Doctrine. From the Hereticks of Antiquity to Those of the present Times, It has been Usual for Those, who have distinguished

tinguished Themselves by an Opposition to their Saviour's Divinity, to oppose this Article also, and from a Denial of the true Eternity of his Person, to proceed to deny likewise the real Eternity of the Punishment denounced to the Breach of his Laws. And there is indeed some Foundation for the Affinity of these Errors. It was the infinite Unworthiness of Sin, which made so costly a Sacrifice necessary for the Expiation of it, and so heavy a Penalty due to the wilfull Continuance in it. Those, who can believe, that a Creature could offer a sufficient and satisfactory Atonement for the Sins of the World, may well conclude, that It was no such dreadful Destruction, which could be averted by the Merit of such Sufferings, and that there is no such heavy Malignity in Sin, which deserved so irreversibile a Doom. If the dignity of the Majesty offended, and the Honour and Authority of the Divine Laws required no more than the temporary Sufferings of a temporary Being, for the universal Expiation of the many Transgressions of them, then It could scarce be supposed, that Each Individual, however impenitent, should be consigned to endless Sufferings for his own personal Guilt; whereas there is an entire Consistency in that Scheme, which sup-
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poses, that Nothing less than the Merits of, a sinless perfect, Divine Person, could satisfy the Divine Justice for the numerous Deviations even of the Best; nor any Thing less than an irreversibile Penalty be inflicted on the unreformed Transgressions of the Worst. Mr. *Whiston's* late Discourse therefore is indeed but consequential of his former Heresies, and is distinguished by the same unparallel'd Confidence, which runs thro' all his Writings. Even his Fellow-Labourers in the same Cause, tho' commended by him for their good Intention, yet fall under his Censure, for not having hitherto "gone to the Bottom of this Matter," as He expresses it, "for not having produced the greatest Part of the Evidence "They might have had both in Scripture and "Antiquity on their Side." Since therefore He is pleased to arrogate to Himself alone the Merit of having entirely and effectually confuted this Doctrine, and ^b "ventures to affirm "upon no small Examination," as he tells us, "that neither the Old nor New Testament "have so much as one plain Testimony for this "Doctrine, but the contrary:" and since He has indeed collected together all the Obje-

tions of Atheists, Deists, and Socinians, against this Article, intermixed and enlarged with some surprizing Novelties of his own, I shall consider the Weight of such assuming and authoritative Decrees, and as far as the Time and Limits of Discourſing will permit, ſhall go thro' the Subſtance of what He has herein advanced.

My Text is at firſt View a plain and ſolemn Declaration of the endleſs Punishment of Atheiſtical and Antichriſtian Transgreſſors. The Eviſions made uſe of to elude the Force of it will hereafter be conſidered: I ſhall at preſent take Occaſion from hence, to vindicate the Truth, the Equity, and the Uſefulneſs of this Doctrin; for there are ſome Objections in that confuſed Collection, advanced againſt Each of theſe particulars.

Fiſt then I am to vindicate the Truth of this Doctrin, or in other Words, to ſhew, that This is the true and real Senſe of the Sacred Writings; for We are not at preſent concerned with Thoſe, who diſpute the Authority, but the Meaning of the Holy Scriptures. Some indeed of the Defenders of our Faith in this Article have gone ſo far, as to attempt to prove it from the Principles of Reaſon only, without the aſſiſting Light of Revelation; but

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herein They have given Advantage to the Adversary, in fixing the Weight of the Cause on That, which is not its proper Strength. It is abundantly sufficient, that We shew, that there is Nothing inconsistent with Reason in this Doctrine, as is proposed under the next Particular of vindicating the Equity of it. But the positive Evidence of it can only be deduced from the Revealed Will of God. The general Doctrine of future Punishment was indeed strongly argued by the Light of Reason, but the endless Continuance of that Punishment was not equally evident and demonstrable by that Light. 'Tis true, there are some Passages of this Sort to be found amongst the Writings of Some of the Philosophers, which may seem to prove, that They had discovered it by their natural Light; but then We may observe, that such Passages are comparatively very infrequent, are usually expressed in a very dubious Manner, and are never attempted by direct Argument, but only incidentally mentioned. Had They Themselves proved the Point, They would in this, as in other Cases, have given Us the Foundation and Course of their Argument; from whence It may seem probable, that even their imperfect Notion of it might perhaps proceed from Traditional Revelation

velation. It may shew, that the greatest Masters of Reason did not see Any Thing so horrid^d absurd in this Doctrine, as has been represented, but It will never prove, that It was absolutely discoverable by Reason only.

It is from Scripture therefore, that We must produce the Evidence of the Eternity of future Punishment; and in This It shines so illustriously, that One should have thought, the only possible Question must have been, concerning the Evidence of the Scripture Itself. If the Doctrine be thought not agreeable to Reason, This might reflect on the Authority of that Revelation; but that It is the real Doctrine of the Bible, might have been esteemed plain beyond the Possibility of a Controversy. Had It been any Speculative Point, any Notional System, which had^{had} no Relation to our Practice in this World, or our State in the Other, and had been set forth with half that Clearness and Lustre, certainly It had never met with a single Opponent; and were We to refer it to any impartial Heathen, who believed neither the Article itself, nor the Scripture in which It is revealed, yet He would make no Scruple to determine, that It was evidently taught and inculcated in that pretended Revelation. -- It is not a Consequence gradually deduced by Argument

gument from intricate Passages, or other Doctrines, but taught in the plainest and most express Terms. -- It is not a single Doctrine or Declaration, but frequently repeated, and almost continually inculcated throughout the New Testament. -- It is not in one uniform confined Phrase, which might be liable to Evasion, but the Expressions are varied, and Every Term of like Import is used, which may confirm and establish the Sense of Each Other. Had the Gracious Author of our Religion really intended to establish this Doctrine, He could not have done it in any fuller or stronger Manner, in Terms less liable to Perversion or Evasion. The State of the Miserable is pronounced to be endless, their Persons immortal, their sufferings irreverfible. Every possible Ground of Hope is cut off, and every possible Circumstance added, which may raise or extend the Idea of irremediable Misery. But no Words can express it more strongly than the very Words of the Sacred Writings, or exclude more effectually any evasive Distinctions, which might weaken the Belief of this Article. As This Vengeance is here denounced against *Those, who obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*, I shall confine Myself to that Gospel, to the Scriptures of the New Testament. *The Lord*

Lord Jesus, says my Text, *shall be revealed from Heaven, in flaming Fire taking Vengeance on Transgressors, Who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.* The Wicked, says our Saviour, *shall go into everlasting Punishment* Mat. 25. 26. The very Sentence shall be, *Depart Ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* 41. In a Metaphorical Manner the same Doctrine is taught, when We are told, that He shall *burn up the Chaff with unquenchable Fire.* Mat. 3. 12. Luke 3. 17. *Eternal Judgment* is Heb. 6. 2. spoken of as One of the first Principles of the Doctrine of Christ. And lest such concise, tho' full Declarations might be misapprehended or perverted, It is else where delivered in a more paraphrastical Form. It is called *Going into Hell, into the Fire, that never shall be quenched; where their Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched.* And It is thrice repeated in the same Place with singular Fervency and Exactness. Mark 9. 43 &c. To such says St. Jude 13. *is reserved the Blackness of Darkness for ever. The Smoke of their Torment* says the Book of Revelations 14. 11. *ascendeth up for ever and ever, and They have no Rest Day nor Night, and again, 20. 10. Such are and shall be tormented Day and Night*
for

for ever and ever. These are the Texts, which more immediately assert and describe the endless Duration of the Punishment of the Wicked. There are Others, which in equivalent Terms represent the Severity of it, the forlorn desperate and hopeless State of Those, who suffer in it. And to render this plain and conclusive Evidence unevadable, We may observe briefly, that as such Declarations relate to Beings immortal in their own Nature, there is no Room to interpret away the Force of them by any relative limited Construction of Them but They must be taken absolutely and positively; -- as They are in some Passages by direct Connection spoken of in the same extensive Terms, as the everlasting Rewards of the Righteous, therefore They are farther confirmed and demonstrated by all those several Texts, which in a Variety of Terms represent the endless, eternal, unalterable Joys of the Blessed; -- and particularly, as They are sometimes distinguished from, and placed in Opposition to the View of Non-Existence, therefore there can be no Refuge in the comfortless Prospect of Annihilation. And these Observations will be yet farther strengthened by an Examination of the Objections of this Author, upon this Point of the Evidence of this
 Doctrine

Doctrine; the Evasions, which He offers to invalidate the plain and cogent weight of it.

And first He observes, ^a as All that have gone before Him upon this Article, have observed before Him, that the Original Words, most generally used by the Sacred Writers to determine the Duration of the Punishment of the Wicked, do not necessarily signify *Eternal* because We sometimes find them applied to Subjects of a Temporary Duration; from whence, if any Conclusion is drawn to the Disadvantage of our Argument, It must be This, which One should not think an Intelligent Writer could impose upon Himself, that because They cannot *always* absolutely signify Eternal, when the Sense is restrained and limited by the Connection, and by a Subject of a temporary and perishing Nature; therefore They are never to be understood so, when no such Restraint or Limitation is expressed or implied. We answer plainly and expressly, that these Words do in their Etymology, truly signify a proper Eternity, and that if They are sometimes used in a less strict Sense, when the Nature of the Thing requires it, yet that That can never pass as any Reason, why They

are not to be understood absolutely, when the Subject is capable of it. They are Terms the most expressive of an endless Duration, of Any that can be used or imagined; and They always signify so far positively endless, as to be express against any other Period or Conclusion, than what arises from the Nature of the Thing. They are never used in Scripture in any other limited Sense, than to exclude all positive Abolition, Annihilation or Conclusion, other than what the natural Intent and Constitution of the Subject spoken of must necessarily admit. -- Yet on this so slender a Remark unsupported by Reason and Argument, and undefended from the obvious Answer always given to it, the whole Evidence of Scripture in this Article is set aside; and the Words arbitrarily and currently rendred *lasting*, which evidently signify *Everlasting* Punishment. No Evasion is so much as offered to invalidate the natural and primary Signification of the Term used. The Word *Αἰώνιος*, which is the Word generally used by the Sacred Writers, is We know, derived from the Adverb *αἰεὶ*, which signifies for ever, and cannot without Force be used in any lower Sense, and particularly This is the Word, by which the Eternal and Immutable Attributes of the Deity are several

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Times expressed. ^a This was the very Term used by our Blessed Lord Himself in that most solemn Description Mat. 25. of the last Judgment and final Punishment of the Wicked, wherein He pronounces it to be everlasting, in the same Form as He sets forth the everlasting Reward of the Righteous. -- But to this latter Remark This Author attempts a Reply; Which may be considered as

A Second Objection to the Scriptural Evidence of this Truth. He tells us first, ^b "that the Use of the Same Word in Both Cases does not imply the equal Duration of the Punishment and Reward." Really Any Person would be apt to suppose It did, without some substantial Reason to the contrary, and for this He only refers Us to the Ordinances of Moses, Many of which were called *νόμιμα αἰώνια*, which yet were not of equal Duration. I answer, All of the same Kind were of equal Duration. The Moral Laws, which oblige all Men in a State of Society, are for ever binding, that is, as long as Men shall be continued in this World; but the ceremonial Laws, which related particularly to the Jews, were everlasting only in this Sense, that They were never to be abolish-

^a II. 40. 28. Jer. 10. 10. Rom. 16. 26. 1 Tim. 1. 17. ^b P. 39.

ed, whilst the Jewish Religion and Polity itself subsisted, till They were superseded by the Revelation of the Gospel. But there is no Room for any such Distinction in the Case of Rewards and Punishments. The Subject is the Same, an Immortal Soul, (in its Reunion with a Body so different from That which at present We bear about Us, that It will be Immortal likewise) and therefore equally capable of Eternal Happiness or Misery. --- Yet without Regard to this plain Distinction, He proceeds to some wild and fanciful Conjectures of the Duration of the several *Aiōnes*, or Ages, and concludes with this Remark very applicable to Himself, a "So foolish and fatal a Thing is it, to leave
 "our Original Guides the Sacred Writings,
 "and their plain and honest Language, and
 "to follow Modern Party Men and Schoolmen
 "in their wild Hypotheses and unaccountable
 "Interpretations." To exemplify this, We are farther deprived of the Benefit of this Argument of the equal Duration of Punishment and Reward, by a newer and bolder Hypothesis. The Everlasting Joys of the Righteous are denied, as well as the everlasting Sorrows of the Wicked. ^b Our Hopes are limited as well as

^a P. 40. ^b P. 43 & 134.

our Fears, and the Expectation of Eternal Happiness to Those, who believe and obey, is likewise censured, exploded and ridiculed. The Best of Those, who serve God in Sincerity and Truth, are left to no better Prospect than That of Annihilation; and after the Enjoyment, however lasting, of the Delights of Heaven, are finally to end in Insensibility and Nothing: A Consideration, which would discourage the Progress of Virtue, damp the Satisfaction of the Reward of it, contradict our natural Desire of Immortality, and which at the same Time contradicts the whole Stream of Scripture Evidence, and defeats the Notion of Life and Immortality brought to Light thro' the Gospel. The longer continuance indeed of Rewards than of Punishments is allowed by this Author, and the Difference calculated,^a and the whole is built on so many Conjectures, Suppositions, and Imaginations, that where Men are not fond of Novelties, or the supposed Learning of the Author does not give Sanction to his wildest Notions, This Part of the Performance may be trusted, without Danger, to the Perusal of Any Reader; Who will find This Doctrine already confuted in his

^a As 2 or 3 to 1000. P. 135.

own Breast; Who will find a Desire of Eternal Existence implanted in his Nature, which He will not believe the Gracious Author of it could place there to no End, on Purpose to defeat it. I proceed therefore to

A Third Objection against the Evidence of the Eternity of future Punishment. On Supposition that the Words here used do truly signify *Eternal* and *Everlasting*, yet He has a farther Refuge in canvassing the Terms used to denote the Punishment, Which He will contend, do signify, not positive Pain or Misery,^a but only a Privation of Being. My Text says, that the wicked shall be punished with everlasting Destruction; Which Destruction He supposes^b to mean a Loss of their Being, a Period of their Existence, an utter and final Annihilation. Thus He explains and applies some other Terms, as That of Perdition and the second Death,^c which He supposes to be literally meant, and to confirm the same sense. -- To which It may be answered, that if there was any Difficulty in these Expressions, It must be regulated by the Meaning of those others, which speak of the same Subject. Now the Denunciations and Descriptions of positive Pain and Misery cannot possibly mean Annihilation

^a P. 36. ^b P. 43 ^c P. 51.

and Non-Existence, whereas the Terms of Destruction, Perdition and Death, are very capable at least of signifying a State of actual suffering. It may be answered farther, that They are not only capable of such Signification, but that They are evidently used in that Sense, and so applied, as to determine and confine them to it. Thus in the Text the Destruction spoken of, is not a Destruction of their Existence, but a *Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power*, a State of Separation from the Divine Majesty and Goodness. It is spoken of as a State of Punishment, and Result of Vengeance, and therefore cannot mean Annihilation, which according to his Scheme will be the final Lot of the Good and Virtuous. Nor is This only the certain Sense of the Word in this Place, but in every Place in which it is used, It bears the same Sense of actual Suffering. The Term $\alpha\lambda\epsilon\theta\rho\omega$, here rendered Destruction, occurs but three Times more throughout the New Testament, and cannot possibly in either Place bear the Sense of Annihilation. The First is That 1 Cor. 5. 5. wherein the Apostle speaks of *Delivering such an One unto Satan for the DESTRUCTION of the Flesh, that the Spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus*: Which needs no Comment
to

to deliver it from such Interpretation. The next is, 1 Theff. 5. 3. *For Yourselves know perfectly, that the Day of the Lord so cometh, as a Thief in the Night; For when They shall say, Peace and Safety, then Sudden DESTRUCTION cometh upon them, as Travel upon a Woman with Child, and They shall not escape.* Here the Similitude used shews, that It imports no Privation of their Being, no Period of Their Existence, but actual Pain and Misery; and the very Representation of the Coming of the Day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment, when this Sudden Destruction shall come upon Them, excludes the Notion of Annihilation, since according to his Hypothesis They will not be annihilated immediately at the Day of Judgment, but will suffer for some Time, though They are allowed the Hope and Prospect of a Conclusion of their Sufferings. The last Place, wherein this Terms *ολεθρος* is used, is 1 Tim. 6. 9. *They that will be Rich, fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtfull Lusts, which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition: not in Annihilation certainly, but in those painful and miserable Sufferings, which are both the natural and judicial Effects of unbounded Lust and Ambition. In like Manner the other Terms here used never signify*

nify a Conclusion of their Existence, but a Continuance of it worse than an absolute Loss of it. Our Saviour pronounces, It had been Happy for such an One never to have had a Being; rather than to have incurred the Woe denounced to the Height of Transgression. Particularly as to the Expression used in Scripture of the Second Death, which He supposes to be literal, even That supposition could not favour his Cause, or be interpreted into utter Annihilation; but however the Scripture itself has so fixed its Meaning, as to exclude a Possibility of such a Construction. For What is the most literal and natural Import of the Term Death? Not Annihilation certainly, for then We should be incapable of a Second Death; but only an Alteration of the Manner of our Existence, A Separation of the present Parts of our Composition. If therefore We were to understand the Second Death in its most literal Sense, according to our fixed Idea and Acceptation of the Word, It must mean another Dissolution of those Parts of Us after their Reunion at the Resurrection; Which, if It returned our Bodies again to the Graves and to a State of Insensibility, would yet leave our Souls in a State of Perception, and capable of eternal Misery. But the Scripture, which has used this Term,

has

has likewise explained it, and left no reasonable Ground of Doubt concerning the Meaning of it. As the first Death means the Separation of our Souls and Bodies from Each Other, so the Second Death means the Separation of Both united from the Enjoyment of the Beatifick Vision; from the Participation of that Happiness for which They were created: A Separation, as the Text expresses it, *from the Presence of The Lord, and from the Glory of his Power*; In which consists the Felicity of Glorified Saints, and Which may not improperly be called the Life of Life itself. Thus this Second Death is remarkably and emphatically described. Rev. 20. 12, 13, 14. *I saw the Dead, small and Great, stand before God; and the Books were opened; and another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life: and the Dead were judged out of those Things, which were written in the Books, according to their Works. And the Sea gave up the Dead, which were in it, and Death and Hell, or Hades, delivered up the Dead, which were in Them, and They were judged Every Man according to their Works. And Death and Hell, or Hades, were cast into the Lake of Fire. This is the Second Death. And again Rev. 21. 8. The Fearful and Unbelieving and the Abominable and Murderers, and Whoremongers and*

and Sorcerers and Idolaters, and all Lyars, shall have their Part in the Lake, which burneth with Fire and Brimstone : Which is the Second Death. Can It now admit of a Doubt, whether This be the Description of a Privation of Being, or of a State of positive Suffering? And if It cannot, It is so far from implying any future Period of this Suffering, that It is demonstrative against It. If It had really the Meaning of Annihilation, It would be as conclusive against all Punishment, as against the Eternity of Punishment; since It is described as taking Place at the general Judgment; on which Supposition All who did not enter into Life, must instantly sink into Nothing; whereas This is not so much as contended for, but would be inconsistent with this Authors own Doctrine; who asserts a future Retribution, and allows of a *lasting*, tho' not an *everlasting* State of Misery. But if *Having their Portion in the Lake, which burneth with Fire and Brimstone, Which is the Second Death*, be indeed a Description of real and actual Misery, then the other Part of that Description, that *Death and Hell, or Hades, should then be cast into the Lake of Fire*, is strong and unanswerable for the Perpetuity of that Misery. It teaches that there was no farther Expectation of any other Dissolution, No Grave

for the Body, No Separate State for the Departed Soul, but that All was irreverfibly fwallowed up and concluded in the prefent Scene of Ruin and Mifery. Thus that no Ambiguity of a Word might be wrefte to fupport a falfe Doctrine, the Inspired Writer, who ufed the Term of the Second Death, took Care to determine the Meaning of it, and to fhew, that it confifted in all the miserable Confequences of the Lofs of the Glorious Prefence of our Maker and Preferver. Nor is this the Language only of the Sacred Writers. Some of the Philofophers Themselves, the Pythagoreans efpecially, fpoke in the fame Stile. They taught the Immortality of all rational Souls, and yet fometimes, when difcourfing of the Divine Dereliction of them, made Mention of their Dying; and the Distinction which They ufed to reconcile the appearing Inconfiftency, was fuch as a Believer of the Christian Revelation would have ufed. "It doth not die," fay They, "by a Ceffation of its Effence but a Deprivation of its Divinity, not by a Lofs of its Being, but by a Lofs of that which is the Perfection of its Being." This Distinction is taken from Hierocles,

α. Ως δὲ ἀνδρῶν οὐκ ἔστι τὸ θάνατον, οὐδὲ τῶν θεῶν, — οὐ γὰρ τὸ εἶναι ἐκλείβει, ἀλλὰ τὸ εἶναι ἐκλείβει. Ὁμοίως γὰρ καὶ τῶν ἁγίων αἰδίου &c. Hierocl. in Carm. Pythag. P. 14. Edit. Cuper.

rocles,

rocles, tho' from the Truth and Exactness of it. It might seem to have come from higher Authority. It is sufficient however to shew the Vanity of inferring any Hopes of Extinction from the Scriptural Expression of the Second Death, since the Philosophers Themselves spoke the same Language; and We are told farther, that This very Expression was proverbially used by the Jews in the same Sense.

A Fourth Objection to the Evidence of Scripture on this Article, is of a singular Nature, and evidences a very studious and industrious Care to evade the Conviction of the strongest Light. Tho' the foremention'd Terms be allowed to signify truly and properly Eternal, and to denote a real and actual State of Punishment, yet even This He will not acknowledge as conclusive for the Eternity of the Sufferings of the Unhappy Persons involved in it. *Tho' their Worm dieth not, and their Fire is not quenched; tho' the Smoke of their Torment ascendeth up for ever and ever,* yet All This, according to this Author, may be literally true, and yet may not infer the Perpetuity of the Torments of the Damned. The Evasion is, that the Fire He insists is to be understood literally; and This may be prepared for endless Ages, tho'

Each particular Person, who is to be cast into it, may not continue as long, as the State, that He is cast into. Thus They may be said to go into Everlasting Punishment, and to be cast into the Fire, that never shall be quenched, tho' their own Personal Sufferings may find an End therein; not by any positive Act of Annihilation, but by a natural Consumption in that State. "Their Worm shall not die, neither shall their Fire be quenched, that is," says He, ^a "They shall have the Flesh of their Carcases devoured by Worms and burnt with Fire, whilst No One shall take away the Worms, or quench the Fire, before such Carcases are utterly destroyed." This Refuge, such as it is, was borrowed from the famed Author of the Leviathan, who interpreted away the Evidence of Scripture upon this Article in the same Manner, ^b and insisted, that on Supposition there was real Proof, that the Torments of Hell shall be Eternal, yet that there was not equal Proof, that the Sufferings of particular Persons shall be coeternal with that State and Place. But this Distinction is not only arbitrary and without Evidence, unsupported by Argument or Authority, but is

^a P. 24. & 41. ^b Lev. P. 245.

likewise inconsistent with itself, and cannot answer the slender Purpose even of Evasion. For if We are to account for these Things according to the natural Course of Things, and that according to the present Course of Nature; if their Carcases are to be consumed by Worms and by Fire, and particular Persons are to perish in Time by the very Effects of their Torments, What then is to be the Fuel or Foundation of the Everlastingness of those Torments Themselves? Is the Worm that never dies, to feed on Nothing, and the Fire that never shall be quenched, to be preserved for no End or Use? If some extraordinary Sinners are to be the Miserable Subjects of it, then the great Objection however is given up, for if Eternal Punishment were Unjust in itself, It must be so in every single Instance. Nay the same Consideration is applicable, if He should suppose, that This fiery State should be continued for the Punishment only of the Devil and his Angels, for whom It was originally prepared. But He seems desirous to give up that Supposition, and is much inclined to Origen's Notion of the Possibility of the final Salvation of the Devil Himself. This He acknowledges to be a desirable Notion. "There
can

"can be no Obstacle;" He says, ^a "to his Be-
 "lief of that Doctrine, but the Supposal of an
 "utter Moral Incapacity in the Constitution
 "of these Worst of Free-Agents, ever repent-
 "ing and amending; Without which Repent-
 "ance and Amendment, as such Creatures can-
 "not, so It is no Ways desirous that They
 "should ever be made Happy either in this or
 "another World, Nor do I believe," continues
 He, "that Origen Himself would have desi-
 "red or expected a Thing so impossible." Had
 He applied the same Consideration to Man-
 kind, He had perhaps solved the greatest Part
 of the Difficulty of this Article. It is that Mo-
 ral Incapacity of their Repenting and Amend-
 ing, who went out of This World finally Im-
 penitent, Which is the great Obstacle to the
 Possibility of their Restitution or Deliverance,
 whilst the Immortality of their Nature must per-
 petuate their Existence in that wretched Condi-
 tion. For were We to allow each Part of the
 Supposition before made, Were the Worms
 and Fire and Smoke of Necessity to be under-
 stood literally, and were the Bodies of the
 Wicked in the State of their Resurrection cap-
 able of being entirely consumed by them, yet

the Immateriality of their Souls must be above the Power of those Consumers, and still continue Them in an unperishable Duration: And even all his own boasting Expressions of Demonstration and Victory do upon this Part of the Subject sink to low, as to say, ^a "that as Worms and Fire, which are to be the Agents in this Destruction, are only of Themselves capable of destroying the Body, and as no other Text speaks directly of the Destruction of the Soul, so *there is no Room for Hope*, that the Soul may not then be utterly destroyed, but may remain capable of a Second Resurrection after the Second Death is over." How This can be reconciled with his own Interpretation of the Second Death, might reasonably be enquired, but I shall proceed to observe, that there is no Necessity for the One, and there is positive Evidence against the other Part of the forementioned Supposition. It may be, that the Fire is not material, but that That, which occasions the acutest Pain and Misery to Us in our present State, may fitly be made the Emblem of the Severity of our Punishment in the next; and the Conjunction of Fire and Worms, which could hardly subsist together,

renders this the more probable. However We are expressly told, that our Bodies, which are *sown in Corruption*, shall be *raised in Incorruption*, and again, without Distinction to the Righteous or the Wicked, that *this Corruptible Body shall put on Incorruption*, and *This Mortal shall put on Immortality*, shall be purged from its perishable Properties, and tho' capable of Pain, will be incapable of Dissolution. Nay the Notion, that It would be liable to be consumed by Fire and Worms, is again inconsistent with the Doctrine of *lasting Punishment*, since such Bodies as ours, would speedily perish in that Condition.

A Fifth Objection to the Evidence of this Article from the Sacred Writings, may be collected from some scattered Remarks on some other Texts and Passages of Scripture, which are produced as inconsistent with, or as invalidating the Force of Those, which are urged in Confirmation of this Doctrine. -- And the First and Chief of these, with which He begins, ^a and which He frequently repeats or refers to, is That Expression of our Saviour Mat. 12 32. wherein He pronounces, that the Sin against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven,

neither in this World neither in the World to come. from whence He infers, that Other Sins may after a temporary Punishment in the other World, meet at length with Forgiveness; or in his own Words, ^a "that Some Sins not forgiven in this World or Age, will be forgiven in the World or Age to come." Now should We allow even this Interpretation, yet this very Text is conclusive for the irremissible endless Punishment of some Sins at least. If the Torments of Some were only Purgatory, and there was Hope of their being remitted hereafter, yet Others are left Hopeless by the very Distinction, and the Sentence is express, that Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, as St. Mark more distinctly expresses it, 3. 29. This is a very convincing Evidence then of the Eternity of future Sufferings in One Instance, whereas It is his earnest Intent and Endeavour to disprove the Possibility of it in every Particular. But farther, This Text does not imply any Thing like Purgatory, or a temporary Punishment in the other World. The Sentence is, that the Sin spoken of, *shall not be forgiven, neither in this World, neither in the World to come; shall not be forgiven, that is, shall be severely punished both*

^a P. 37.

here and hereafter. Some Sins, such as are consistent with a general Good Intention, and habitual Desire of discharging our Duty, may meet with their proper Punishment in this World, that They may not prejudice our Salvation in the next. The Frailties and casual Transgressions of the Righteous are often thus corrected here, that They may not be obnoxious to heavier Punishment hereafter; and even the Wicked, who are not deemed incorrigible, are favoured with the same wholesome Discipline, in Hopes of their future Amendment and Preservation: as St. Paul determined in the Case of the Incestuous Person, *to deliver such an One unto Satan for the Destruction of the Flesh, that the Soul might be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus.* 1 Cor. 5. 5. Thus some Wicked Men may have their Portion of Suffering in this Life; Others are permitted to prosper in this World, being reserved for an heavier Doom in the next; Whilst Those, whose extraordinary Vices require an uncommon Judgment, are marked out for Punishment both here and hereafter. Their present Miseries are only Anticipations and Earnests of severer Vengeance in Revelation, and their Sins are not forgiven, *neither in this World, neither in the World to come.* This is the plain Meaning of the Expression, referring

ring to the Season of Vengeance, in which the only Distinction is made betwixt this World and the Other; but there is not either in the Letter or the Scope of the Sentence any Intimation given of any temporary Punishment in the next Life, or any Hopes of Remission after some purgative Sufferings therein. And to confirm this, We ought not to pass by unobserved that particular Notion and Tenet of the Jews to whom this Speech was delivered, and to which our Saviour did apparently therein refer. It was a prevailing Opinion among them, at that Time, and is still to be found in their Writings, that Nothing but Apostacy from his Religion could finally deprive a Jew of the Favour of his Maker. The Privileges of their Covenant They looked upon to be so great, that if They did not wholly renounce it, They should for the Sake of that be Secure of Happiness in the next World, tho' They might be liable for their Transgressions to Sufferings in this. Some Sins, They taught, would be forgiven immediately upon Repentance; Others at the great Day of Expiation; whilst more Heinous Transgressions would require a longer Time, and heavier temporal Punishments: They might not be forgiven, till their very Departure hence, when, as Israelites
 They

They would not fail to be admitted to the Glorious Presence of their Maker. To this Our Lord alludes, corrects the Error, and assures them, that some obstinate, wilful, habitual Transgressions, would destroy all Hopes of Mercy and Favour, would not be expiated at their Death, but would meet with Vengeance beyond the Grave, would invalidate all the Privileges of their Covenant, and would not be forgiven, *neither in this World, neither in the World to come*^a. This seems a clear and

^a Tho' This is, I think, the true Sense of this Passage, and is confirmed by that signal Fact of that unexampled Vengeance, which even in this World befell the Jewish Nation, which continued to blaspheme the Holy Ghost, and to reject the Powerfull Evidence of his most supernatural Operations; yet neither is That Interpretation of Those to be disregarded, who suppose this Phrase to signify, that the Sin spoken of was not pardonable under any dispensation or Religion, Jewish or Christian. For the Jews looked on the *Days of Messiah* as a *later State* and Dispensation of the Church, to succeed their own: on which Account it is called *the last Days*, *Is. 2. 2.* & *Heb. 1. 2.* and *the last Time*, *1 John 2. 18.* and *the World to come*, *Heb. 6. 5.* And some Sins were to be atoneable among Christians, for which there was no Atonement among the Jews, since *by Christ They were to be justified from those Things, from which They could not be justified by the Law of Moses.* *Acts 13. 39.* And therefore when Christ says, *This Blasphemy shall not be forgiven in this World nor in the World to come*, He is thought by Many to mean the same as, neither to be forgiven in the Jewish State, whilst It lasted, nor in the Christian after it, neither Moses, nor He, having provided any Sacrifice or Expiation for it.

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rational Explanation of the Text, and entirely foreign to the Point of the temporary Torments of Hell. -- The next, which occurs, is that difficult Passage in 1 Pet. 3. 19. wherein the Apostle tells Us, that *Christ was put to Death in the Flesh, but quickned by the Spirit; By which also He went and preached unto the Spirits in Prison, Which sometimes were Disobedient, when once the Long-Suffering of God waited in the Days of Noah.* And This, after a Popish Interpretation, is offered as a Proof, that ^b "These were capable of that Repentance in Hades, which They could not be brought to by the Preaching of Noah." But since This Interpretation not only comes inconsistently from a Protestant Writer, but is offered without any Attempt of an Argument, new or old, to support it, to vindicate it from the Exceptions made against it, or to confute the rational and coherent Construction of this Passage by several real Protestants, ^b I shall only observe, that This Interpretation, if allowed, will no Way affect the Argument of the Eternity of future Punishment; since according to this Doctrine, our Saviour did not go

^a P. 45. & 111. ^b See Stephens's Sermons. Vol. 1st. Sermon. 9. and Dr J. Edwards Dissert. on 1 Pet. 3. 19.

to preach to Those in Hell, to give Them another Opportunity of recovering the favour of their Creator; but to Those, who were in Hades, the State of Departed Souls betwixt Death and Judgment, to preach to Them that Gospel, which They did not hear, whilst on Earth. But if This was intended as an Article of Tryal and Probation, the Possibility and Penalty of rejecting it, would be still the same, as if They had heard it on Earth; and That Supposition could not invalidate the general Denunciations of *everlasting Destruction* to Those *who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*. -- The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is likewise with surprizing Confidence urged against the Unalterableness of future Punishment, tho' It was the very Intent of the Parable to inculcate it. Both the Crime and Punishment of the Rich Man are misrelated, and his Torment, how great soever, said to be ^a "only Medicinal, and "designed for his Conversion and Salvation, "and not for his Destruction." This again is offered without the least Support or Proof. The First Reading of the Parable shews the contrary, and Every farther Reflection confirms

it. His Punishment is expressly declared to be helpless and irreverfible, and He for that very Reason represented as follicitous to prevent the like dreadful Ruin of his Brethren. --- It may feem fomewhat more plausible, which He farther obferves, and delivers with a peculiar Triumph, "It having never," He fays, "been hitherto obferved by any Commentator; that, except a fingle Place in the Revelations, relating to Gog and Magog, or to People utterly unknown to Us, the Punishment of the Wicked is never properly faid to be for more than τὸν αἰῶνα, or an Age, a fingle Age, in all the Books of the Old and New Testament: What other Beings or Actions foever are there faid to be for αἰῶνες or for αἰῶνες τῶν αἰώνων, Ages, or Ages of Ages." In Answer to which We may obferve, Firft, that This Obfervation, if true, is trifling and foreign, fince by the Liberty, which He affumes, of translating αἰῶνες τῶν αἰώνων, by Ages of Ages, even That Exprefſion would no more have afcertained the Eternity of its Continuance, than the Other, nor could Any have been poſſibly uſed, which by the like Liberty might not have been evaded. We may obferve Second-

ly, that This Remark is false in itself; that It is not a single Passage, in which this Expression is used, but that It is three Times repeated in this Book of Revelations.^a Again Thirdly, If It was only used in this Passage, yet if It signifies an Eternal Duration, That One would be fully sufficient, since the Point objected to is the Impossibility and Injustice of any eternal Punishment; and, as It has already been observed, if It were in itself Unjust, It must be so in every possible Instance. Lastly, if the Remark had been entirely well founded, and Αἰῶνες τῶν Αἰῶνων had never been used of the Punishment of the Wicked, yet the Expression εἰς τὸν Αἰῶνα is full as significant and expressive of a proper Eternity, and indeed less liable to Evasion than the Other. For It is the Use of it in the Plural Number, which gives Him the Handle of translating it by Eternities of Eternities^b, in order, as He thinks, to shew the Absurdity of it; whereas the singular Number is not capable of a Translation, which can bear such an Appearance: Which, if It signifies an Age, when spoken relatively of a limited Being, yet means a proper Eternity, when spoken of a Subject, which is capable of

^a Rev. 14. 11. 19. 3. 20. 10. ^b P. 107.

it. --- He attempts however to confirm this, by observing, that a "αἰδιος, which is generally supposed to be much more expressive of a proper Eternity than αἰώνιος, is yet used in Scripture for a Time limited, or for the Duration of the Age or Ages, till the Day of Judgment, and no longer." Here again, without allowing the Supposition, that αἰδιος is more expressive of a proper Eternity than αἰώνιος, yet the Remark itself is entirely without Foundation. It is not true, that αἰδιος is used in Scripture for a limited Time, or for the Duration of the Age or Ages till the Day of Judgment, and no longer. The Passage referred to is Jude 6. *The Angels* which kept not their First Estate, but left their own Habitation, *εἰς κέλιον μεγάλης ἡμέρας δεσμοῖς αἰδαῖς ὑπὸ ζόφον πετήρηκεν*, *He hath reserved in LASTING Chains*, says This Translator, *under Darkness unto the Judgment of the Great Day*. And this is the Authority, on which We are to be deprived of the Force of this Text. By an arbitrary Construction of *δεσμοῖς αἰδαῖς*, by lasting Chains, We are assured by Mr *Whiston*, that That is the Meaning of it, and by his Sentence the Controversy is to be determined. --- But since He seems to al-

low, that *αἰδιος* is a Term the most expressive of a proper Eternity, We may ask, why the Sense of it is to be restrained in this Place? There is no additional Epithet, which might explain and limit the Meaning of it, nor does the Context require any such Limitation. If with our Translation of the Bible, We render it, that *He hath reserved the fallen Angels IN everlasting Chains under Darknes unto the Judgment of the great Day*, even then there is no Intimation expressed or implied, that They shall then be released from their Chains, but that to their endless Confinement shall then be added Inflictions of positive Pain and Misery. But It is as agreeable to the Grammatical Construction, and more consonant to other Passages of Scripture, to render it, *He hath reserved Them FOR everlasting Chains under Darknes at the Judgment of the great Day*. They are represented as being at present at Liberty to do Mischief; The Head of them is stiled *the Prince of the Power of the Air, the Spirit that now worketh in the Children of Disobedience*; and is said to walk about seeking *Whom He may devour*. This Author in particular labours this Point at large, and begins his Observations upon a View of the Evidence, with
this

this Remark, however foreign^a, that “neither
 “the Devil, nor his Angels and Dæmons, nor
 “Wicked Men are to be cast into Gehenna or
 “Hell-Fire, till the Day of the great Judg-
 “ment;” and had He but been so consistent
 as to Interpret this Text according to that
 Doctrine, He had found *αἰδιος* standing in its
 full Meaning of Eternal. --- The concluding
 Part of those Texts, which are incidentally urg-
 ed, as invalidating the Force of those Others,
 which threaten an eternal Punishment, are
 Those, which speak of Different Degrees of
 Punishment, that Some will be beaten with
 many, and Others with few Stripes in the fu-
 ture World: “Which most naturally,” says He,
^b “implies, that the Punishment of Some of
 “the Wicked shall be much longer than of O-
 “thers.” We may fairly answer, that This
 implies directly the contrary, and that This is
 the very Consideration, that clears up the Ju-
 stice of Eternal Punishment, that tho’ their fe-
 veral States shall indeed be irreversible, yet
 that the Degrees of their Misery shall be diffe-
 rent in Proportion to the respective Degrees
 of their Demerit: as I shall have Occasion to

^a P. 98. &c. ^b P. 108.

shew more at large in vindicating the Equity of this Doctrine.

The Sixth and Last, which can be considered as an Objection to the Evidence of this Doctrine, is This, that It was not received and acknowledged by the Primitive Church, at least was not inserted amongst the Articles of their Faith.^a And This indeed, if true, would be a very material Exception. The Primitive Fathers had many Advantages for the Interpretation of Scripture, which We want; such as their Acquaintance with the Apostles and Apostolical Men, and their Knowledge of the true Imports of Words and Phrases in Use amongst Them, and of Customs prevailing with Them. They are at least unquestionable Witnesses of Matters of Fact; and in this View Matters of Opinion are really Matters of Fact: that is They inform Us, what Notions and Doctrines did prevail in the Church at that Season, and the Prevalence of a Doctrine under such Times and Circumstances of Advantages is a high Presumptive Proof of the Truth of it. Had We no Evidence therefore of their Belief of it, This might be a great Weakning of our own Faith in this Article. But This is in Truth the Bold-

^a P. 103.

est of all the confident Assertions in this Performance. One should rather have expected, that He would have called it an early Error, than that He should have denied its Foundation in Antiquity, and Reception amongst the First Christians. Should We produce all the Evidence on our Side, We must transcribe almost all the Apologies and Homilies, all the argumentative, and all the Practical Discourses of the Primitive Defenders of our Faith. It must however be Difficult to prove their Concurrence in this Article to the Satisfaction of this Objector, since It was hardly possible for them to express their Sense of it in Terms and Phrases more determinate, and less liable to Evasion, than those which the Sacred Writers have used; and really a Writer, who can translate ^a ἀνελλειπῆς, καὶ ἀπελευτήτης αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, *by indefectible and endless Ages of Ages*, and ^b τὸν ἀπεράντον αἰῶνα, *for an Endless Age*, and yet in both Cases reject the proper Eternity intended by them, is incapable of being convinced by any Terms; and shews, not a Disposition to enquire after Truth, but a Resolution of establishing his own Opinion, true or false. For the Satisfaction of more reasonable and

^a P. 61. ^b P. 76.

impartial Enquirers, We need only refer Them to those very Testimonies of the Primitive Fathers, which He Himself has here collected^a, which strongly confirm the Truth He opposes; and are as express and decisive, as if They had lived to hear the Doctrine disputed. I shall only add, in Opposition to what He observes, that The concluding Article, in the Apostles Creed, of the Life Everlasting, was intended and understood to include this Doctrine. An Endless State of Existence after the Resurrection of the Body, of Happiness to the Good, and of Misery to the Wicked, was here-

^a Clem. Rom. ἐν τῷ αἰωνίῳ κολάσει. — Barnab. Θανάτῳ αἰωνίῳ μετὰ πικρίας. — Herm. Vis. Melius erat illis non nasci. — Apost. Const. αἰωνίαν κόλασιν. — Θάνατος αἰδώς. &c. — Ignat. αἰωνίαν πόνον δίκην. — οὐ τὸν πρόσκαιρον Θάνατον, ἀλλὰ τὸν αἰώνιον. Polycarp. & Eccles. Smyrn. τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον καὶ μηδὲ ποτε σβεννύμενον. — αἰωνίῳ κολάσει. — Just. Mart. αἰωνίαν κόλασιν. — ἐπ' αἰωνίαν ἀπὸ πυρὸς καταδίκην. -- τὸν ἀπέραντον αἰῶνα. — αἰώνιον πῦρ, — ἐν αἰδίσει αἰωνία. Irenæ. εἰς τὸ αἰώνιον πῦρ. — Tertull. in Ignem æque perpetem & jugem. — Cyprian. Credite illi qui incredulis æterna Supplicia Gehennæ Ardoribus irrogabit. — Cremabit addictos ardens semper Gehenna, & voracibus Flammis vorax Poena, nec erit unde habere Tormenta vel requiem possint aliquando vel finem. — Min. Felix. Nec Tormentis aut Modus ullus aut Terminus. Illic sapiens Ignis urit Membra & reficit, carpit & nutrit. — Non damnis Ardentium pascitur, sed inexesâ Corporum Laceratione nutritur. -- Lactant. Idem igitur divinus unâ eademque vi atque Potentiâ & cremabit Impios & recreabit; & quantum è Corporibus absument, tantum reponet; ac sibi Ipse æternum Pabulum subministrabit.

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by taught, and all their Comments and Expositions so explained it. As soon as the contrary Heresy was broached, It was universally censured as a Heresy ; and then Discourses were professedly wrote in Vindication of it, which had before passed as an indisputable Truth. We might appeal for This to the plain Meaning of those Authorities, which He has here set before Us ; but I shall cite one of Them more at large, because It is one of the first Comments on the Creed, and may shew the Sense of the Ancients concerning the Meaning of this particular Article. It is That of *Irenæus* ^a, Τὰς ἀσεβείας καὶ ἀδίκας ἢ ἀνόμους καὶ βλασφημίας τῶν ἀνθρώπων εἰς τὸ αἰῶνιον πῦρ πέμψῃ· τοῖς δὲ δικαίοις καὶ ὁσίοις, καὶ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτῶ πετηρηκόσι, --- ἀφθαρσίαν δωρήσεται, καὶ δόξαν αἰῶνιον ὡς ἐπιήσεται. And again in that, which This Writer Himself calls his Second Creed. ^b *Mittens in Ignem æternum Transfiguratores Veritatis, & Contemptores Patris sui & Adventûs ejus.* To which I shall only add that of St Austin ^c. *Istis in æternâ Vitâ verè feliciterque viventibus, illis infelicitèr in æternâ Morte sine Moriendi Potestate durantibus, quoniam Utrique sine fine.* From hence We may see, that his Charge on Bp Pearson

^a Iren. Lib. 1. C. 2. P. 45. Edit. Grabe. ^b Lib. 3. C. 4. P. 206. ^c Tom. Sext. P. 238. Edit. Benediçt.

and other Modern Commentators, as boldly including the Doctrine of future Punishment in this Article without Authority, is itself bold and groundless, and that It was so included in the earliest Expositions, that We meet with. And This Interpretation of *The Life Everlasting* ought to be the more conclusive and satisfactory to this Writer, because He elsewhere contends for the Use of Life in this its primary Signification, barely as a State of Existence, and Death as absolute Destruction and Annihilation; for here This Acceptation of it would set Him right, who has been so zealous for this Sense of it, where the Sense will not admit of it. But the Use of his Terms is often varied according to the Hypothesis, which He has to serve; and This is but One of many Inconsistencies to be found in that Performance.

I have thus endeavoured to methodize and answer the Summ of those Objections, which This Author has advanced against the Truth and Evidence of the Eternity of future Punishment. The Equity and Usefulness of this Doctrine demand and deserve a distinct Consideration. God grant, that This View of the infallible Certainty of it may have such Weight with Us, that We may never feel a more dreadful and experimental Conviction of the Truth of it.

2 THESS. I. 7, 8, 9.

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, In flaming Fire taking Vengeance on Them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power.

THE Truth and Certainty of the everlasting Punishment of the Wicked has already been proved as the Subject-Matter of Revelation. The Evidence of it from the Sacred Writings has been illustrated and vindicated against the Exceptions of the latest Collector of Objections, that has appeared against this Article. I have already shewn, that This is the real Doctrine of Scripture, and am now to shew, that the

Scripture is not to be rejected on Account of this Doctrine. The Equity of it is next to be considered; for It is This Point, which has occasioned such zealous Endeavours to disprove the Evidence of it. It is represented as incredible in itself, and not to be received on any Pretensions of Revelation: It is urged as inconsistent with the Divine Attributes, and therefore not capable of being proved by any Testimony or Course of Argument. And if This was as clearly demonstrated, as confidently asserted, there would be no Method of avoiding the Consequence, that We must resign our Religion as an Imposture, and give up our Bible as a Fable; which has hitherto led Us into the Belief of false and incredible Doctrine: for that This is the Doctrine of it, has been shewn at large, and It cannot be distinguished away but by such Evasions, as would leave uncertain the plainest Truth therein contained. -- But briefly, in Support of that Revelation, which teaches this Doctrine, We may demand, Was not that Wise and Learned Age of the World, in which the Gospel was first preached, as capable and as ready to discern Difficulties and Incredibilities in its Doctrines, as Any of its most malicious Enemies at this Day; and yet were not all their Doubts and

and Objections overballanced by that incontestable Evidence, which the First Preachers offered in Confirmation of it? Were not real Difficulties a Proof of their Sincerity, since Nothing but the Love of Truth could have prevailed with Them to advance Doctrines, to which Men would be backward to give Assent? The Natural Method to have promoted their Reception, and the Propagation of their Religion, would have been to have taught Doctrines and Precepts agreeable to the Notions and Humours of Mankind; and if This Article be so shocking, and so repugnant at first View to the common Sense and Reason of Mankind, as is pretended, the Appearance even of This, I say, might be urged as a Confirmation of its Truth, since Nothing but a Divine Commission could have induced them to publish so unacceptable a Doctrine. If their Situation and Sufferings likewise be considered, This Argument will still be strengthened; for They, who reject the Scripture-Testimony of Punishments, must suppose, that Others were in Love with Punishments and Torture, for its own Sake, to attest it: in which Supposition doubtless there is more Difficulty, than in the Doctrine so strenuously contested. -- With Regard, farther, to Those, who admit the Authority of the

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the Sacred Writings, but think it necessary on that Account to distinguish away this Sense of them, as containing a Doctrine inconsistent with the Attributes of the Divine Author of Them, to These It may be observed, that It is easier for Us to judge of the Sense of a Divine Revelation, than of the Extent of the Obligations of the Divine Being by Virtue of his Attributes. I mean not to signify the Opinion of Those, who took this unhappy Method of getting clear of some Difficulties, by saying, that the Nature of the Divine Attributes was unknown, and that Justice, Wisdom and Goodness signify something different in the Creator from what They do in the Creatures. This was certainly in its Consequence, tho' not designed or perceived, Undermining the Foundation of natural as well as revealed Religion; but I say, that tho' these Qualities and Attributes bear the same Meaning in God, as in Ourselves, for this Reason amongst Others, because We are bound to imitate them, yet that It is easier to understand the Meaning of a Revelation designed for our Instruction, than to judge of the exact Extent of his Proceedings by Reasonings drawn from his Adorable Attributes. We are sure, that God will do what is right and just and good, in the plain

plain Sense of these Words, but We cannot so readily judge, What is right and just and good for Him to do, by our Reason as by his Revelation. Indeed to pretend to know, by our natural Light, what God must do by Virtue of such Attributes, in the vast Compass of Futurity, with Respect to his fallen Creatures, is as absurd, as to pretend to be infinitely Wise Ourselves. For as God is so for this Reason, because He knows what Infinite Wisdom, Goodness and Perfection require of Him, so if We knew That, We should be in the same State of Perfection. But when He communicates to Us, what the General Rules of Providence in the Government of the Universe require, in Vindication of the Honour of his Laws; and that Nothing less than irreverfible Punishment will be the Doom of every wilful impenitent Transgressor; It is not our Part, It is not becoming our State or Nature, to say, This is incredible, and thereupon to reject the plain Meaning of Words confirmed by sundry Repetitions, and Variety of synonymous Phrases, because We are resolved not to receive a Doctrine, which We do not approve. If indeed It were absolutely inconsistent with the first Principles and Dictates of Reason, This would be a just Exception to the Authority or
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the Meaning of this Revelation. But here We are willing likewise to join Issue, and as We confess, that Reason alone could not prove the Necessity, so We insist, that It cannot disprove the Equity of Eternal Punishment.

There are many Considerations from Reason to be offered in Vindication of it. The Dignity of the Majesty offended; The Authority of the Lawgiver, who had a Right to enforce his Laws with what Sanctions He thought fit; The like Eternal Duration of the Rewards proposed to Obedience; The free Choice of the Party interested; The perpetual Continuance of the Offences of a Soul immortal in its Nature and impenitent in its Disposition; are Reasons of great Weight in the Illustration of this Argument. But These are so well known, and have been so often solidly enforced, that I shall not at present enlarge on them; but shall proceed to vindicate the Equity of this Doctrine, by answering the Objections made against it, confining Myself to Those, which have been urged by the Author of the Performance before-mentioned.

The First, which I shall take Notice of, is indeed founded in direct Infidelity, but does here deserve Notice, as It has been adopted by this Author. Perhaps Its Tendency was not discerned

cerned, but It is the very Argument, which Infidels have urged. It relates to the Unprofitableness of future Punishments, which, He says, would be ^a "without any other Advantage to "Themselves, (the Persons Punished) or to Others, or to God Himself, than as Instances "of the absolute and supreme Power and Dominion of the cruel and inexorable Author of "their Being." Now This, if of any Weight, would be as conclusive against all, as against eternal Punishment, and Could Any Deist say more? This was not confined to his proper Argument of the Eternity of future Inflictions, but is inconsistent with his own Doctrine, who teaches the Notion of a lasting Punishment. Whatever Advantage therefore, as He expresses it, Whatever Ends were to be answered by the Infliction of Any After-Punishment, might be more fully answered by the Severity of its being Eternal. Farther, if We examine the Principle itself, We shall find it not only inconsistent in this Writer, but groundless in its Notion. For upon this Principle no Punishment could ever be inflicted, which cannot become due till after the Commission of the Crime; and no final Punishment, which only is properly Punishment, could be inflicted, till the Opportunities of Amendment are past;

and then, It seems, 'tis useless to inflict it, and must argue Cruelty in the Creator, to inflict it unnecessarily. This is One of the newest as well as boldest Flights of Infidelity. Hitherto It has been thought some Difficulty to account for the Justice of God in deferring Punishment, now It seems, 'tis discovered, that 'tis unreasonable and cruel ever to inflict it. -- But to consider more closely his Argument. "Endless Punishment, He says, would be without any other Advantage to Themselves," i. e. the Persons punished, "or to Others, or to God Himself, than as Instances of the absolute and supreme Power and Dominion of the Cruel and Inexorable Author of their Being." This is boldly, arbitrarily, and I may say, prophanelly asserted. Endless Punishment cannot, We must confess, be of any Advantage to the Persons Themselves, after the Day of Trial is past, and the gracious Opportunities of Repentance and Amendment are neglected and gone. When It comes to be inflicted, positive Misery and despairing Reflections only can ensue. But whilst This Doctrine is preached unto Us, whilst We are forewarned of our approaching Danger, this Denunciation of Eternal Vengeance is of real Advantage. It is for the Benefit of Mankind, that

that their Duty should be thus powerfully enforced, and Many doubtless owe their Title to the Joys of Heaven, to their Belief and Apprehensions of the Torments of Hell. They are, as They ought to be, influenced by their Hopes and Fears; and entring on the Performance of their Duty on these Principles, grow daily more sensible of their Obligations to their Maker, and the amiable Task in itself of Religion and Virtue. It was for the Interest of Creatures so liable to Temptation, that They should be supported by Motives sufficient to overballance any Temptation that might beset them; and for their Sakes the Wisdom of the Lawgiver has enforced his Laws with such Sanctions, as are able to outweigh every possible Allurement to Transgression. Considering the Weakness of our Nature, and the Difficulties of our Situation, the Cause of Virtue could not be supported without the Apprehension of such a future State; and yet Eternal Vengeance could not faithfully be threatned, unless It was faithfully to be fulfilled. To say, that God might be better than his Word, was so loose an Expression, and so unsound a Doctrine, that had It not come from a Person of an unquestionable Regard to Religion, It would have sounded more like the Scoff of an

Infidel, than the Solution of a serious Divine. As the Apostle says 2 Tim. 2. 13. *If We believe not, yet God is true, He cannot deny Himself.* He cannot suffer Himself to impose upon his Creatures with imaginary Fears, nor will his Holiness, Wisdom and Truth permit Him to falsify his own Word, to frighten Them into Virtue by Terrors, which He never intended to execute; or to alter his Intention, in order to have Mercy on Those, who when They knew their Danger, would yet have no Mercy upon Themselves. As the same Apostle elsewhere expresses it ^a, *God forbid, yea let God be true, but every Man a Liar, as it is written, that Thou mightest be justified in thy Sayings, and mightest overcome, when Thou art judged.* His immutable Truth obliges Him to fulfill, what his infinite Wisdom thought fit to denounce, and This judged Nothing less than Eternal Vengeance sufficient, either as due to the Demerit of their Offences, or as a Preservative to Them from the Contagion of them. Thus even This Eternal Punishment was intended in its Nature as preventive, and designed for the Advantage of Those, who refused to make Advantage of this Doctrine. It was

^a Rom. 3. 4.

threatned in order to deter Men from it, tho' It cannot, nay even because It cannot be remitted after this Threatning, if it be wilfully and finally incurred. It is a Misrepresentation therefore of this Doctrine, to say in general, that It can be "of no Advantage to the Persons concerned," since It may be made the Means of their Eternal Happiness; and it is a partial View of it, to consider it only in the future Execution, without regarding the present Denunciation of it. These cannot be disunited without giving up the Divine Veracity; which as It were Blasphemy to gainsay, so for the Sake of our Hopes, It would not be desirable to disbelieve. --- But farther, The remaining Part of this his Remark is Groundless Misrepresentation, even if We consider this Sentence only in the Execution of it, after the Opportunities of improving it are past. This, He says, "would be of no Advantage, either to Themselves or Others." But how does This appear? It must be presumed, He means, because This Punishment will not be inflicted, till the Dissolution of the World, when All Mankind will have past through their State of Probation, and consequently None of These can reap any Benefit from the Examples of the Others Sufferings. But are Those of the Human

man Kind the only Rational, Intelligent, Dependent Beings, whose Welfare depends on their Obedience? Does not the Scripture inform Us of Some, who are *Ministring Spirits sent forth to minister for Them, who shall be Heirs of Salvation*, and may there not in the boundless Extent of the Universe be many other Beings, dependent likewise, whom being not immediately concerned with, We are therefore not acquainted with? May not the endless Punishment of Wicked Men be a lasting Admonition to These, to preserve their Obedience, and serve for an Example to forewarn Them of the Consequences of wilful and impenitent Neglect? At least, Ought not the Contrary of All This to be certainly known, before a weak short-sighted Mortal shall presume to assert, that such Punishment can be of no Advantage to Others; Which, if meant only of other *Men*, is not pertinent to the Argument, if not, may be absolutely false. This Dispensation of the severe Punishment of Mankind may be of farther Use in the Government of the Universe, and may be profitable, as an Example, to Beings of another Species and Order. He adds, and "This without any Advantage to God Himself." This again is but an irreverent Expression, and, if taken strictly

ly, would be of as much Force against any other Doctrine as This. It would be as conclusive against the Obligations of Virtue, the Certainty of Reward, and even against the Existence of the Creation itself. For are These of any Advantage to God, or is That Consideration a Disproof of their Truth and Reality? As Eliphaz says in the Book of Job, 22. 2, 3. *Can a Man be profitable unto God, as He that is Wise, may be profitable unto Himself? Is it any Pleasure to the Almighty, that Thou art Righteous, or is it Gain to Him, that Thou makest thy Way perfect?* And again, as Elihu in the same Book of Job, 35. 6, 7, 8. *If Thou sinnest, What dost Thou against Him, or if thy Transgressions be multiplied, What dost Thou to Him? If Thou be righteous, What givest Thou Him? or What receiveth He at thine Hand? Thy Wickedness may hurt a Man, as Thou art, and thy Righteousness may profit the Son of Man.* To the same Purpose Solomon, Prov. 9. 12. *If Thou be Wise, Thou shalt be Wise for Thyself: but if Thou scornest, Thou alone shalt bear it.* They plainly made the Distinction betwixt the Unprofitableness of these Services to God, and the great Importance of them to Men; and were too Wise to think, that It was any Objection against the Obligation of our Duty, or
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the Weight of its Sanctions, that the Happiness of God does not depend on our Observance of it. The Epicureans indeed made the Consideration of the Self-sufficiency of the Deity an Argument against his Providence, and Superintendence over the Concerns of Men, though It was obvious to have seen, that this Course of Argument would end in Atheism, and would have been of as much Weight against the Creation as the Care of the World. Yet This same Argument is here urged by a professed Christian against the Infliction of future Punishment, that It will be of no Advantage to God, to punish thus severely the Offences of his Creatures. Be it so; neither was It of Advantage to Him, to make these Creatures at all, if by Advantage We mean Addition to his own Happiness; for What can add to a perfect self-sufficient Being? Yet his Providence saw great and Wise Ends to be answered by creating Beings capable of knowing and obeying Him; capable of imitating and enjoying Those of his Perfections, which were not incommunicable. If It was of Advantage, that his Power should be illustrated, his Wisdom exhibited, his Holiness manifested, and his Justice revered, These were made visible by the Creation of dependent, intelligent, Free-Agents;

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Which was necessarily followed and farther confirmed by the Dispensation of Punishments. As the Manifestation of all his several Attributes tend to his Glory, so his Regard to Holiness, and the Vindication of his Justice, do more particularly answer this End, and as the Good and Virtuous do glorify Him by a voluntary Obedience, so the Disobedient likewise, as Examples of his Vengeance, shall become Evidences of his Hatred to Iniquity, and shall promote the same End in a different, a more unhappy Method. As the Wise Man observes, Prov. 16. 4. *The Lord hath made all Things for Himself, yea even the Wicked for the Day of Evil.* For though their Punishment may not be vindictive only, yet even as such, No Objection can be made against the Equity of it. My Text represents it under the Name and Notion of Vengeance, and even in that Light It is strictly defensible. It is the just Recompence of their Disobedience, and a necessary Vindication of the Authority of the Lawgiver. The Moralists of Old taught the same Doctrine, and assigned these three distinct Ends of Punishment; the Reformation of the offender, the Warning of Others, and the Satisfaction of the Affront and Injury done to the Authority of the Lawgiver. This may be learnt from Plato

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to and Aristotle, whose Authority may be of Weight with Those, who undervalue That of the Holy Scriptures. They thought this requisite to repair the Honour of Him, whose Injunctions had been contemptuously neglected and violated, as indeed It must evidently imply a Defect of Wisdom or Power, of Holiness or Justice in a Legislator, who can unconcernedly see his Precepts despised and transgressed, and suffer the Transgressors to pass with Impunity. To suppose then, that God made Man without intending to take any farther Care of Him, and left Him to wander without Law or Rule for his Conduct; or that He gave Him a Law, without adding any, or at least any sufficient Sanctions; or that He added Sanctions, of sufficient Weight indeed, but which He never intended to execute, are Incredibilities much beyond those Difficulties in the Articles of our Faith, which are represented as too shocking for the tender Faith of Gainsayers. --- Briefly, God has made Man a punishable Creature, free to act, to obey or to transgress; He has given Him natural Apprehensions of the Punishment of Transgression, and has confirmed them by the more clear and distinct Notices of Revelation; He has set before Him Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing; has
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shewn Him the Obligation and Importance of his Duty, and forewarned Him of the terrible Consequences of the Neglect of it; has invited Him to accept of Happiness and Mercy, and admonished Him, that This is the only Opportunity of securing it; and if under all this Instruction, Admonition and Exhortation to regard his own Welfare, He obstinately persist to disobey his gracious Lawgiver and Benefactor, and chooses the Path, to which He sees Misery annexed, Can it be consistent with Veracity, Wisdom, Holiness or Justice, to pass by unobserved this continued Disobedience, to remit the Punishment due to it, and to falsify his Threatnings in Favour of Those, who condemned his Laws? Is it of Advantage, that We should have such a Notion of the Deity, or, in an impartial Appeal to our own Consciences, Does not the Character of a just Legislator imply his Regard to the Neglect, as well as to the Observance of his Laws, and a suitable Retribution to Each?

But This Objection, as was observed, struck at the Belief of all Punishment, as well as at the Christian Doctrine of Eternal Punishment: There are Others advanced, which more immediately affect this Article. Of These

The next, which I shall take Notice of, shall

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be That, which is drawn from the Goodness of God, which makes a great Part of that Performance. He gives Us a very large Collection of Texts, which set forth the Kindness, the Compassion, the Long-suffering of our Creator, from whence He infers, that ^a "We ought
 "to learn never to restrain the Mercy and
 "Goodness and pardoning Grace of God." Certainly indeed It is not our Part to restrain, or to extend the Mercy of God, but humbly and thankfully to accept it, as it is set forth to Us in the Word of God. But to assert, that We are not to restrain the Notion of it; to teach, that the Divine Mercy is unlimited and unforfeitable, is false and antiscriptural. It is not the Account, which the Sacred Writings give to this Attribute, nor That, which our own Reason would have suggested. Mercy is not the only Attribute of the Deity, but can be no farther exerted, than is consistent with Holiness, Wisdom and Justice. It is restrained by these several Perfections, and will be denied to Those, who finally offend against These. Let Us hear the Holy Spirit of God speaking in his own Words, and assuring Us, that his Mercy is not unconfined, but that They, who reject the gracious Offers of it in their Season,

shall Themselves with Indignation be rejected, when They shall too late apply for it. Prov. 1. 24, &c. *Because I have called, and Ye refused, I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded; But Ye have set at Nought all my Counsel, and would none of my Reproof; I also will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock, when your Fear cometh; When your Fear cometh as Desolation, and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind; when Distress and Anguish cometh upon You. Then shall They call upon me, but I will not answer; They shall seek me early, but They shall not find me: For that They hated Knowledge, and did not choose the Fear of the Lord; They would none of my Counsel, They despised all my Reproof; Therefore shall They eat of the Fruit of their own Ways and be filled with their own Devices.* Is This a Description of unforfeitable Mercy, or is it not a just Representation of the heavier Vengeance on Those, who despise and abuse the seasonable Offers of Grace and Mercy? Does not such a Representation correspond with our natural Apprehensions and Notions of Equity? and would This unrestrained Mercy pleaded for, This unlimited Compassion to all Creatures without Distinction or Regard to their Moral Character, be itself a Character worthy a Being of infinite Perfections,

ctions, of unmeasurable Truth, Holiness and Justice? Would not such an undistinguishing Tenderness, without rational or religious Motive, be rather Weakness than Mercy; and shall We ascribe That to the great Governour of the Universe, which We should censure in a Mortal Judge? The Goodness of God, in its strict and proper Notion, is a term implying his aggregate Perfections, including all his several Attributes. He will ever do what is unerringly Good, what is morally right and reasonable; and in this Sense his Goodness is never to be restrained, no, not by the partial Motives of Compassion and Tenderness. But his Goodness considered only as a Disposition to prevent the Misery, and promote the Happiness of his Creatures, cannot be an unrestrained Principle, but must be guided by Equity, Honour and his own Divine Glory. It is a Scheme attended with Difficulties unanswerable, to suppose that the Communication of natural Good or Happiness was the only Motive to Creation. There may be many Reasons far beyond the Reach of our Discernment; but a Regard to Moral Good is even to Us evidently a Part of the Design. The contrary Notion is contrary to Scripture, to Reason, to Fact. The utmost possible Happiness is not
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seen and felt, as It must have been, had This been the sole Motive to Creation. The Natural and Judicial Effects of Immorality prevent it, and to our own and Others Sins are owing our Sufferings. We are certified therefore not by abstract Argument, but plain Experience, that the Goodness of God in the Formation of the World, and of Ourselves in particular, was not an indiscriminate Intention of communicating Felicity to All, but of making Those Partakers of his Happiness, who should imitate his Holiness; of requiring and encouraging that Moral Behaviour, in the Discharge of which Man is perfected, and God is well-pleased. Here Reason subscribes, and Revelation concurs to establish this Doctrine. The Divine Benevolence is no where represented as a Blind Principle, exerting itself to the actual Communication of Happiness to Every Individual, however unworthy, but as confining its Influence to the Promoting of Piety and Goodness, rewarding the Righteous, forgiving the Penitent, and encouraging by every Motive Perseverance in Holiness, or Reformation of Iniquity. Those general Declarations therefore of the Goodness of God, which He has at large collected, We accept always with all Thankfulness, but deny that Those
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Declarations will disprove his other Attributes, or imply any Dispositions inconsistent with the Character of a righteous Governour and Judge. -- The Observation of this Author upon a Review of his Collection is This ^a, that "so many plain and clear Texts for the Goodness of God, ought not to be superseded by certain later Interpretations of a few more obscure ones; evidently contradicting those natural Notions;" Which is most true, but entirely foreign to any Conclusion, which can be drawn to the Advantage of his Argument. The Texts, which represent the endless Punishment of the Wicked, Are neither few nor obscure, nor any way contradictory to the Divine Goodness in the true Notion of that Attribute. He goes on and concludes "the prodigious Concern expressed by God for the Salvation of Mankind to be inconsistent with the Possibility of their Eternal Damnation;" whereas It is indeed the Severity of the Punishment appointed for Sin, which makes our Creator so solicitously to endeavour our Deliverance from it. "It is inconsistent," He adds, "with the Opinion of the Reprobation, the unalterable Reprobation, and inevitable Dam-

^a P. 18.

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“nation of Mankind:” Which is true again, but has no Connection with the Doctrine of the Eternity of future Punishment, to which He unfairly joins it. For do Those, who assert the Eternal Punishment of the Wicked, assert likewise their unalterable Reprobation, and inevitable Damnation? or is there any necessary Connection betwixt these Articles? Are not These separate and distinct Doctrines? and Do not Divines usually by this very Distinction clear this Difficulty, and vindicate the Equity of Eternal Punishment, because It is the Consequence of a Mans own Choice, and what it is in our own Power to incur, or to avoid? Is it worthy then of a Controversialist, assuming to Himself so deep a Discernment, and so extensive Knowledge, to give so unfair an Account of the Doctrine He opposes, to blend it with Articles ridiculous and profane, which are no way connected with it, nor maintained by Those, who assert it; and then by rejecting Those, to draw a seeming Conclusion against This, which does in Reality no way affect it? For We do as readily join in rejecting the absurd Doctrines of unalterable Reprobation and inevitable Damnation, and owning them to be in every Sense inconsistent with the Divine Goodness; but We deny that Any
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Thing can be inferred from thence to the Confutation, nay We improve that Consideration to the Vindication of the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment.

The next Objection is That, which is most usually urged by Those, who gainsay this Article, namely, that It is inconsistent with the Divine Justice. "This," says Mr *Whiston*^a, "I take to be an absolute Demonstration against the proper Eternity of that Punishment," and the like dogmatical Declarations as to This Point, are frequently repeated throughout his Performance. We are little concerned, what Private Persons apprehend to be demonstrative, where the Course of the Argument is not offered to Examination. Assertions unsupported by Reason or Authority, need no laborious Confutation, but may with equal Ease be denied and rejected. Should We therefore positively assert, that It is not inconsistent with the Divine Justice, We should say as much for this Article, as This Author has said against it. The only Passage, which can be considered as an Attempt to prove the Injustice of it, is That, which He gives in another Part, where after a Representation of the Eternal Ven-

^a P. 38.

geance denounced, in all its Terror, He adds,
 "And All This for the Sins of this short Life,
 "fallen into generally by the secret Snares of
 "the Devil, and other violent Temptations,
 "which They commonly could not wholly ei-
 "ther prevent or avoid." --- But where does
 He find Eternal Vengeance denounced to such
 Sins of Infirmary? Does the Scripture teach
 any such Doctrine, or threaten everlasting Pu-
 nishment to such Sins, as We cannot wholly
 either prevent or avoid? Do not the Conde-
 scension and Tendernefs of the Divine Being
 so frequently exprest, his Compassion to our
 Frailties, and Readiness to forgive even our
 wilful Offences upon our sincere Repentance,
 contradict any such Notion? Nor can It be
 said, that, tho' the Scripture indeed does not
 countenance any such Notion, yet the Wri-
 tings of Divines have so represented it, for
 None ever taught, that Eternal Damnation
 would be inflicted on our Sins of Infirmary.
 It is to the wilful, habitual, unreformed, im-
 penitent Sinner, that the Scripture, and all ra-
 tional Defenders of it, denounce everlasting
 Punishment; and therefore This again is alto-
 gether Misrepresentation, unbecoming in eve-

ry Respect to assuming a Dictator, since It must be founded in gross Ignorance, or wilful Prevarication. ---- Or would a Christian Writer follow the Example of Unbelievers, and endeavour to extenuate the highest Transgressions of Mankind, the utmost possible Offences of Creatures against their Creator, as slight and inconsiderable? In Fact, They cannot All be represented in that undistinguishing Manner, in which This Writer sets them forth, to shew their Disproportion to the Vengeance threatned, as “the Sins of this short Life, fall-
 “en into generally by the Snares of the Devil,
 “and other Violent Temptations, which They
 “commonly could not wholly either prevent
 “or avoid.” Those, which can truly plead this Excuse, will meet with merciful Allowances, and even heavier Transgressions may upon true Contrition and Amendment find Mercy and Pardon; but certainly It is in our Power by the Grace of God to prevent and avoid all habitual Neglect and Disregard to our Duty. No Violence of Temptations can excuse This; and indeed there is little Temptation to such a general Disregard to the Foundation of all true Comfort, whatever strong Incitements there may occasionally be to particular Transgressions. Can then our voluntary, repeated unamended Of-
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fences be really thought slight and inconsiderable? Is it Nothing, to live in a continued Disregard to the God that made Us, and to renounce our Allegiance to the great Governor of the Universe? Is it Nothing, to crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open Shame, frustrating his gracious Design in redeeming Us by so astonishing a Method of Condescension? Is it Nothing, to sin against the Holy Ghost, to profane the Temples designed for his Service, resist his Motions, and grieve his Spirit? Could a Heathen say any Thing to alleviate the Crime of living in an entire Neglect of the Deity? And how then is this Crime aggravated in a View of the Christian Scheme of Things, when We consider God not only as our Maker and Preserver, but our infinite Benefactor, our Redeemer and Sanctifier? Shall not then God Visit for these Things, shall not his Soul be avenged on such Persons as these? The Evidence, which He has afforded Us for the Truth of his Religion is so convincing, as to leave the Disbelief of it inexcusable; and the Habitual Neglect of it upon the Acknowledgment of its Truth, is yet more inconsistent and self-condemning; and therefore the Text very suitably denounces this Eternal Vengeance against Those, who
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under such Opportunities of Information, either *know not God, or obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus*. These are Offences, which cannot be palliated by the Pretences of Infirmary; and therefore the whole Stress of this Argument must lie in that Expression, that They are "the Sins of this short Life only," which however heinous in Themselves, yet cannot be thought to deserve everlasting Punishment. This is the constant Clamour of all Objectors against this Article. Temporary Offences, say They, cannot justly be followed with eternal Vengeance, because there would be no Proportion between the Continuance of the Sin and of the Punishment. -- But if there be no Proportion between the Continuance, there may be between the Degree of Each, because the Continuance is not the only material Circumstance of Either. Whosoever sincerely advances this Objection, and thinks it in Earnest conclusive, must little have considered the Course of Nature and of Authority, or the Distinctions of Reason and Truth. In the First Place, This Principle is contradicted by the Course of Nature. We see in Fact, that Men run Themselves by their own Faults into Miseries, which exceedingly outlast the fatal Step, which occasioned them; and that They
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frequently suffer in various Instances throughout their whole Lives, by the natural Effects of Vices, which They unwarily committed in the Beginning of their Unhappy Management of Themselves. Nor are such only accidental Effects, but apparently annexed and intended by Nature to prevent such Misconduct; and therefore This Objection is indeed Atheistical, since no One, who believes the God of Nature to be the Author of Revelation, can urge That as an Exception to the Dispensation of the One, which He sees contradicted in the Constitution of the Other. --- Nor has Civil Authority ever admitted of this Principle. All Magistrates have ever found it necessary to exceed the Proportion in this Article of its Continuance, between the Penalty and the Offence, and to condemn to perpetual Imprisonment, Banishment, or Poverty by Confiscation, Those, who perhaps were most speedy in executing their wicked Devices; nor is the Equity of this Procedure disputed on this Account in such Cases. -- Nor does Reason teach the Necessity of such an equal Proportion in the Continuance of the Penalty and of the Transgression. The Heinousness of a Crime is not to be estimated only or chiefly from the Continuance, but from the Nature
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of it. The Time is only a Circumstance of Aggravation, where all other Circumstances are equal, but otherwise may be infinitely overballanced by other Considerations. A Man may commit Murder in a Moment, whilst a deliberate Fraud may take up much Time and Premeditation, yet No One will doubt, whether of These deserves the severest and most lasting Punishment; or whether It should be proportioned to the Time only, in which the Offence was committed. Should We confine Ourselves only to the Consideration of this One Article of the Duration of Transgression, We should much err in our Idea of the Guilt of it; Which is to be taken from the Nature of the Thing, from the Dignity of the Person against whom the Offence is committed, from the Obligations of the Person offending, and the Opportunities and Motives to the Offence. And therefore Lastly, This Consideration of the transitory Duration of the Life, in which all Human Offences are committed, which is advanced as an Objection against the heavy Punishment of them, may strongly be retorted as a just Vindication of it. "The Sins of this short Life" are so much the more heinous, because the only Inducements to it, and supposed Advantages of it, are confined to so inconsiderable

rable a Duration. The less is the Fruit of Sin, the greater is the Ingratitude of the Sinner, to rebel against his Maker on so slight Temptations. To disobey our Supreme Lawgiver and Benefactor, to undervalue his Favour and Blessing, to transgress his Laws enforced with Eternal Sanctions, for the Sake of Allurements, which cannot indeed promote our Happiness, and which, if They could, are so fading and transitory, is a high Aggravation of the Folly and Wickedness of such a Choice, and justly subjects the Transgressor to the heavier Wrath and Indignation. Upon the Whole then, The Disproportion of the Punishment as to its Continuance, is no Argument against the Equity of it, unless It can be proved disproportionate to the Guilt of the Offence. But This is a distinct Article, and is particularly answered and cleared by the frequent Assurances, which We meet with, that there will be different Degrees of Punishment in the State of Retribution, suitable to the several Degrees of the Offences of Mankind. Tho' This State shall be irreversible, tho' All Impenitent Sinners shall without Hope of Restitution be punished from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power, yet even This Punishment itself shall be allotted

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in Weight and Measure, and the positive Degrees of Misery shall be inflicted in exact Proportion to the Demerit of the Offenders. Some shall comparatively be beaten with few, Others with many Stripes, whilst Some shall yet receive greater Damnation. Divines have therefore rightly and usually distinguished future Punishment into Pain of Loss, and Pain of Sense. The Former, which is chiefly represented in the Text, will be the Lot of All impenitent Sinners, and the Despairing Reflections, which will arise from a Sense of the Loss of Gods Favour, and the Impossibility of recovering it, will be no inconsiderable Part of the Torments of the Damned. This Privation of Happiness will occasion real Misery, yet That is by no Means All which the Scripture threatens to the hardened and incorrigible. The Inflictions of positive actual Torments are threatened by the most lively Representations of sensible Misery, but These ever in a due Proportion to the Degrees of our Iniquities. Thus the Righteousness of God will be vindicated, and We are farther assured, that his Judgment will not only be Just in itself, but that It shall appear to be so to Men and Angels at the Great Day, and that One End of the Appointment of that Day shall be for

for the universal Manifestation of the Justice of God. At present We are on many Accounts incompetent Judges of the exact Demerit and Provocation of Sin. We wilfully overlook many Considerations, which would aggravate the Heinousness of it, and there may be many Others beyond the Reach of our present Apprehensions. God alone, who best understands his own Nature, and ours, can estimate the Guilt of our Transgressions against Him, and He has forewarned Us, that It will justly subject Us to eternal Punishment. It is therefore much safer, more rational and becoming, to acquiesce in his Determination, to rely on the Equity of his Providence, than boldly to dispute his Attributes; to trust even implicitly in his Goodness rather than question his Truth; applying to This that suitable Passage spoken in the Person of God Himself by his Prophet Ezekiel 6. 10. *And They shall know that I am the Lord, and that I have not said in vain, that I would do this Evil unto Them.*

I am now in the Last Place to add somewhat briefly on the Usefulness of this Doctrine. This had hitherto been acknowledged by All, who had treated on this Subject; whether Those, who vindicated, or Those, who objected to the Truth of the Article itself. But

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This Author, who seems resolved to exceed All that had gone before Him, and to attack this Doctrine on every Side, denies This likewise ; and ^a “supposes, that Those, who will “not suffer Themselves to be moved by the “Fear of a temporary Punishment, as He has “represented it, would hardly ever be moved “by the Supposal of an absolute eternal Duration of that Punishment.” But is there any Foundation for any such Notion in Reason, Consent or Experience? With Regard to Reason, are Temporary Motives of equal Weight with Eternal Sanctions, or likely to have the same Influence on Rational Creatures? Is it of so much Consequence to Us, to retain our Integrity and preserve inviolably our Obedience to our Maker, in this present State of Trial, if We believe that future Punishment may at length have an End, and Happiness be hereafter obtained ; as if We believe This to be the only Season of Grace, and that irreversible Ruin will follow upon our Neglect? Is it not natural for Men to be more indifferent about their present Conduct, where there are such After-Hopes of retrieving a false Step ; and to give Way to the Force of Temptations, when They are taught, that notwithstanding some

^a P. 141.

heavy Penalties, which They may subject Them to, yet the final Issue may still be secure and comfortable? Is not the Denunciation in the Text of Eternal Vengeance, of *Everlasting Destruction* from the Presence of the Lord, and from the Glory of his Power, a much more weighty and affecting Argument to prevail with Us to forsake our Iniquities, and to secure Gods Favour and our own Happiness in the only Season, in which They can possibly be secured? The ancient Enemies of Christianity were so much of this Opinion, They thought this so beneficial an Article, that They would not allow our Religion the Honour of the first Discovery of it, but contended, that It was a Doctrine well known and understood before.^a And that the Usefulness and Efficacy of this Doctrine is generally acknowledged, is implied in the very Reason, which This Author assigns^b, why Many Divines, whom He supposes not to believe it Themselves, are yet "willing "to be thought to do so, for Fear of the Abuse of the true Doctrine," as He calls it, "by "the Body of Mankind, if It were preached "to Them." This is an Acknowledgment, that the Doctrine of a temporary Punishment is more likely to be disregarded, than of an

^a Vid. Orig. cont. Cels. L. 8. P. 409. ^b P. 138.

Eternal One, since Those, whom He imagines to be in his Sentiments, are thought willing to conceal them, because They esteem them not so serviceable to Mankind, and to the Cause of Virtue, as the received Opinion. Even That Prelate, who, as He says^a, “chose rather to “give up the Veracity of God in these his “Threatnings, than to defend this Eternity,” yet declared very strongly for the Usefulness of this Doctrine, seemed to think, It was published more for the Sake of the Benefit than the Truth of it, and in repeated Expressions inculcated his Opinion of its Importance. “The Belief,” says He^b, of the Threatnings of God in their utmost Extent, “is of so great Moment “to a Good Life, and so great a Discouragement to Sin, that if Men were once set free “from the Fear and Belief of This, the most “powerful Restraint from Sin would be taken “away:” and again, c “If Any Thing more terrible could have been threatned to the Workers of Iniquity, It had not been unreasonable, because It would All have been little “enough to deter Men effectually from Sin.” This was his professed Opinion, however inconsistent with an Attempt to evade the Exe-

^a P. 136. ^b Tillotsons Works. Vol. 1st. P. 322. ^c P. 324.
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cution of those Threatnings : and if We proceed from Reason and Authority to look into Fact, We shall find still more convincing Evidence of the Weight and Influence of this Doctrine. It is but too visible, that since Men have learnt to wear off the Apprehensions of Eternal Punishment, the Progress of Impiety and Immorality amongst Us has been very considerable. Since We have been taught to dispute the Authority of the Sacred Writings, or to distinguish away this Sense of Them, We have felt the Effects in a more universal Corruption, and more open Dissoluteness of Manners. Unusual Crimes have appeared ; Uncommon Heights of Wickedness have been attained : More have deviated from the Path of Piety, and Fewer have returned into it. The Restraints of Virtue are weakned, and the very Principle of Reformation and Amendment is lost ; and the Consequence has been, what was naturally to be expected, a more abandoned Pursuit of Iniquity and Prostitution of Conscience. Whatever may be said upon the Comparison, concerning the general Complaint at all Times, of the Iniquity of the Times, yet I fear We may, upon repeated Reflection, and with the greatest Impartiality, determine the Question to the Disadvantage of the present, and

and confess our late Progress and Improvement in Wickedness beyond the Example of former Ages. The Effect is visible, and the Cause is not obscure; whilst Principles are advanced, which strike at the Root of all Obligations, or weaken the Sanctions of Those, which are most confessed.

I have thus endeavoured to vindicate the Truth, the Equity and the Usefulness of the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment, against the Exceptions of a late Performance.-- The only Application shall be very briefly, with Regard to the Character of those Persons, to whom This Eternal Vengeance is threatned in the Text: *Those that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The Apostle, We see, had not learnt the Notion of the Innocence of Error, or the Sufficiency of Sincerity in any Perswasion: Points, which, with Respect to particular Persons, cannot be determined without a Knowledge of their inward Dispositions, and of their outward Circumstances, Abilities and Opportunities of Information; but which in general are false and antisciptural. It is observable, that these Denunciations of Vengeance are in Scripture rather more frequently directed expressly against Unbelief than against Practical Neglect: Not
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that our Practice is under any Perswasion indifferent, but because Infidelity, under Means of Conviction, proceeds first from the same evil Disposition as practical Immorality, and then opens the Way to farther Acts and Habits of Vice. Scepticism and Unbelief are criminal, both as proceeding from vicious Prejudices and unfaithful Enquiries, and as producing in their natural Tendency dissolute Manners and unfaithful Dealings. St Paul therefore specifies this Impiety as liable to Eternal Vengeance, because It is the very Fountain of All Others; because It leads not to occasional only, but to habitual and total Neglect of Duty, leaves Men at Liberty to pursue every Gratification by any Means, and cuts off the very Hope of any Recovery from this licentious Conduct. And as there are Degrees of Punishment even in the irreversible State of Retribution, Those are here suitably distinguished, to whom the heaviest Penalty is due, who evacuate every Obligation, and advance Doctrines, which, if received, would tend to our own Misery, to the Dishonour and Disregard to the Deity, and the Confusion of Society; Such are Those, who through voluntary and affected Ignorance *know not God*, and under our Opportunities of Conviction reject the Gospel of our *Lord Jesus*

Jesus Christ. -- It is the Concern of all sincere Christians, both for the Sake of Themselves and Others, of Those especially, who are concerned in the Care of Others, to endeavour to obviate the spreading Mischief; to shew that Matters of Belief are not trivial Matters; but that on them the Establishment of Morality itself does depend, that for them only, our past Breaches of it will be pardoned, and the imperfect Progress of our best Endeavours be accepted. May We All therefore in our several Stations manifest a suitable Zeal for our Holy, our comfortable Religion, contend earnestly for the Faith delivered to Us, and labour, as Opportunity offers, by Authority, by Instruction, by Exhortation and Example, to inculcate the Necessity, the Importance of Christianity, as the only real Support of Virtue, the only sure Foundation of Comfort and Happiness.

F I N I S.